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A woman plants seeds on a farm on the grounds of Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church, March 26, 2017, in Machakos, Kenya. The farm is where they grow food for the parish and teach the local community about farming. It was through Pope Francis' teachings that Sr. Josephine Kwnega came to see farming not merely as a livelihood, but also as a sacred calling. (CNS/Fredrick Nzwili)



by Sr. Josephine Kwenga

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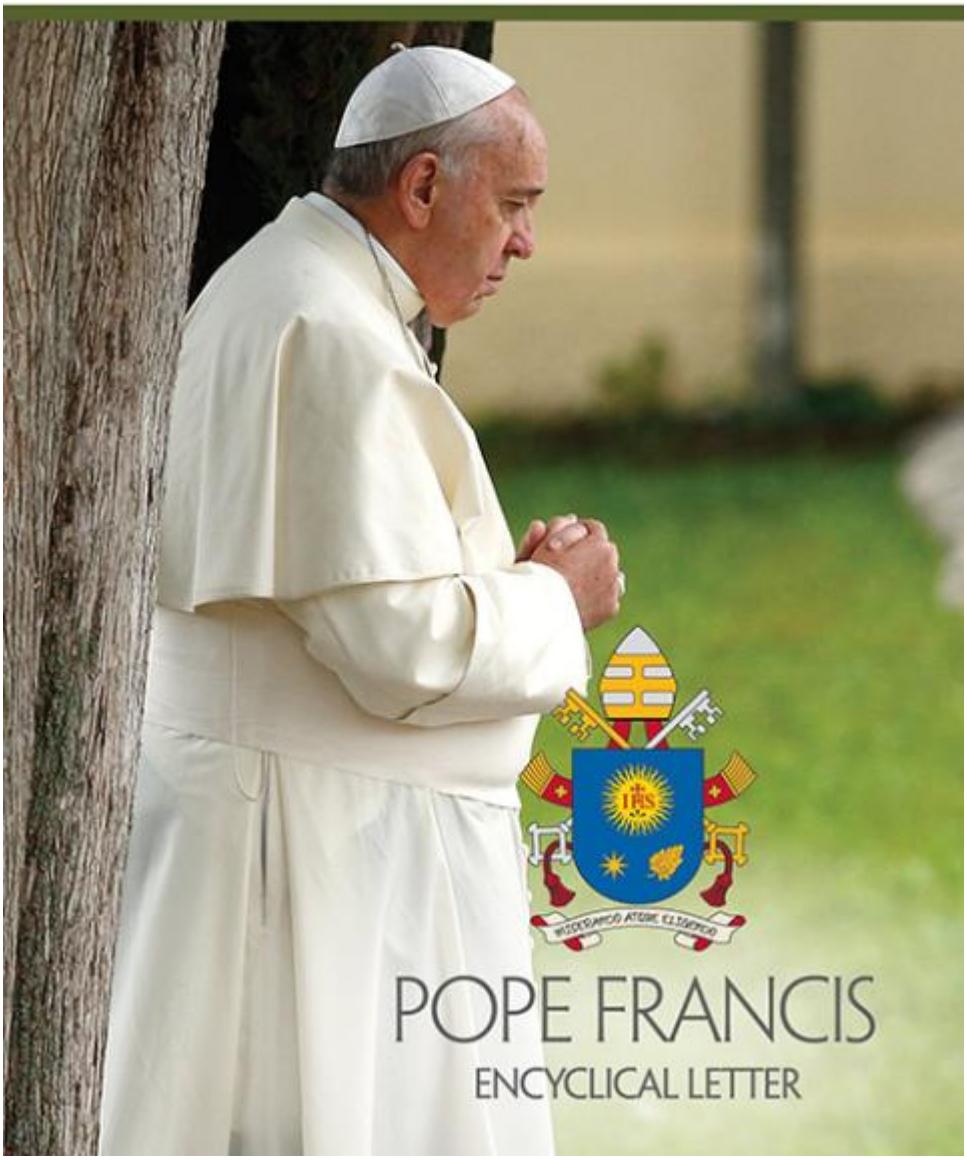
April 29, 2025

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Pope Francis was a prophet for the earth. It was through his teachings in "*Laudato Si*' , on Care for Our Common Home," that I came to see farming not merely as a livelihood, but also as a sacred calling. His words also helped me see creation's beauty in daily life. Each seed I planted became a symbol of hope, each harvest, a reminder of God's providence. Francis' words were "tilling the soil" of my soul, deepening my spiritual life, teaching me humility, patience and communion with God, nature and fellow human beings.

In rural Kenya, under the warmth of the African sun and the rustle of crops in fertile soil, Pope Francis' call in *Laudato Si*' was not and is not just a trumpet sound around the walls of the Vatican, but it resonates profoundly in our hearts. His invitation to care for our common home is not abstract, but takes root in our farms, in our communities, and in our spiritual lives. No longer is the Earth just a resource to be used, but a sister to be loved and a mother to be honored.

His plea, "The earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor," stirs my conscience and compels action. As a farmer, I witness every day evidence of maltreatment of our earth in depleted soils, unpredictable weather patterns, and community struggles. Yet, amid these challenges, I also see hope, especially when we unite in faith and action to protect and restore what has been entrusted to us by our creator.



Cover of the English edition of Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment, "Laudato Si', on Care for Our Common Home." (OSV News/Courtesy of U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops)

The call to communion in *Laudato Si*' is one of its most compelling messages. We are brothers and sisters in a shared vocation of "earth carers," not solitary

caretakers. This call to unity inspired efforts of collaboration here in Kenya that evolved into a Consortium for Sustainable Agriculture and Environmental Conservation, with 12 member institutions.

We not only committed ourselves to regenerating the earth, but to working in harmony with one another for the healing of our society. Each partner brings unique gifts of spiritual wisdom, grassroots experience, or academic insight for the sake of our shared mission: to cultivate food security, ecological justice, and spiritual renewal.

We see regenerative farming as Gospel work, good news for the earth and for all of us. It is a sacred act of healing because it teaches us to work *with* the earth, not against it. Each seed planted is a prayer of hope sown into the soil. Planting cover crops is not just for soil fertility, but an act of respect to allow it to rest and regenerate. Composting is not just an act of gratitude on our part for the fruits we have enjoyed, it returns the fruits of the earth to become new soil for the future.

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Pope Francis constantly called us to "ecological conversion" to see the world with new eyes and to act with renewed hearts. Regenerative farming is a conversion of minds and hearts, an act of justice that gives dignity and nurture to the earth itself, which then gives itself back in abundance, nurturing and feeding us with its fruits in a world suffering from food insecurity and inequity. It fosters sharing of new scientific and local knowledge, practical tools and faith. As regenerative farming communities, we are building an ecosystem of learning and service to our world, built on faith.

Farming has always been a contemplative activity for me. When I rise with the sun to tend the land, I think of the Psalms that praise the work of creation and find joy in being its partner. When I walk through rows of thriving crops, I sense the breath of the Creator. As the rains fall over our plots and seeds begin to sprout, I feel joy. When drought or pests strike, I lean on faith not only for solutions but for the strength to keep going with others beside me. In all of this I see the legacy of Pope Francis and feel the Holy Spirit moving through the rhythms of regeneration.

Pope Francis once said, "*There is a nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions.*" They become spiritual practices lived out through our hands in

the soil, composting, planting, and harvesting. Together, they form a mosaic of humble offerings that witness to a bold vision of ecological and spiritual renewal. The renewal in farming is a growing movement here in Kenya and together, we embody a shared vocation: We cultivate communion and we restore creation. We are confidently sure we can count on the legacy of Pope Francis to continue to guide us in protecting and renewing our common home.

This story appears in the **The Legacy of Pope Francis** feature series. View the full series.